

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 FEAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 /067 W
-----081841Z 127107 /44

R 081641Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1594
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, PINT, FR
SUBJECT: JACQUES CHIRAC UPS HIS TONE

SUMMARY. FORMER PRIME MINISTER JACQUES CHIRAC, NOW PRESIDENT OF THE RPR (GAULLIST) PARTY, WAS A GUEST OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PRESS CLUB ON APRIL 7. WHILE CHIRAC HAS MADE A NUMBER OF PUBLIC APPEARANCES IN RECENT DAYS, THE HIGHTENED TONE OF HIS LATEST REMARKS (ON GOF, THE FRENCH UNITED LEFT, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY, CONCORDE, US/PCF CONTACTS AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S APRIL 6 PRESS BRIEFING ON THE PRESENCE OF COMMUNISTS IN WESTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS) MERITS SPECIAL ATTENTION. EMBOFFS PRESENT CAME AWAY WITH THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT CHIRAC, IN HIS MANIFEST AMBITION OF BECOMING PRESIDENT OF FRANCE, WILL NOT HESITATE TO CRITICIZE SEVERELY THE US AND MANY OF ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE HIS GOAL. END SUMMARY.

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1. AFTER FENDING OFF AGGRESSIVE QUESTIONS ON THE INTERIOR ORGANIZATION OF THE RASSEMBLEMENT POUR LA REPUBLIQUE (RPR), JACQUES CHIRAC RESPONDED TO VARIOUS QUESTIONS TOUCHING UPON FOREIGN POLICY:

A. AMEMBASSY PARIS/PCF RELATIONS: NO, WE ARE NOT IRRITATED, BUT I PERSONALLY AM OF THE OPINION THAT A

BETTER OCCASION THAN THE PRESENT, HIGHLY POLITICIZED SITUATION IN FRANCE WOULD HAVE PRESENTED ITSELF FOR UNDERTAKING SUCH CONTACTS.

B. STATE DEPARTMENT'S APRIL 6 RELEASE (STATE 76635): THIS DECLARATION IS A FAR CRY FROM THAT OF KISSINGER, HAIG OR AMBASSADOR VOLPE. WHAT IS BEING UTTERED MERELY REPRESENTS A RECOGNITION OF CERTAIN REALITIES ON THE PART OF THE USG.

C. CONCORDE: THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO TECHNICAL JUSTIFICATION TO FORBID THE LANDING OF CONCORDE. THE US GOVERNMENT IS SHOWING ITS BAD FAITH BY ENGAGING IN FALSE ATTACKS AGAINST FRANCE. WE WOULD BE MOST ANGRY OVER AN ULTIMATE REFUSAL, AND THERE WOULD CERTAINLY BE CONSEQUENCES FROM THE FRENCH END.

D. EUROPE: CONCERNING THE ELECTION OF A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT THROUGH UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, THE RPR WILL NOT BE DIVIDED. IT IS TRUE THAT, IN THE FACE OF THE RISING POWER OF TOTALITARIAN REGIMES ON BOTH THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT, EUROPE MUST STAND UP. FURTHERMORE, IT IS TRUE THAT, IF EUROPE DOES NOT UNITE, IN 20 YEARS IT WILL BE A SICK MAN. BUT WE HAVE STRONG RESERVATIONS. AS THINGS NOW STAND, THE FUTURE POWERS OF THE ASSEMBLY MUST BE CLEARLY DELINEATED IN ADVANCE OF ITS ELECTION, AND THE ELECTORAL METHOD MUST BE IDENTICAL FOR ALL COUNTRIES INVOLVED. IN ADDITION, THERE MUST BE PARALLEL POLICIES ON SUCH MATTERS AS ENERGY, ARMAMENTS, INDUSTRY AND FOREIGN TRADE. TAKING ENERGY, FOR EXAMPLE: THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY IS A FARCE, AND SOME OTHER SOLUTION SHOULD BE FOUND. EVERY TIME FRANCE GETS INTO A DIFFICULT

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CULTY, SHE CHANGES HER INSTITUTIONS. HENCE THE FREQUENT REVISIONS OF OUR CONSTITUTION. UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE FOR THE EC PARLIAMENT IS MERELY THROWING SAND IN THE EYES OF THE FRENCH ELECTORATE, THE SAME OLD TACTIC TO RECTIFY PROBLEMS. WITHOUT A PREVIOUS AGREEMENT CONCERNING THE PARLIAMENT'S FUNCTIONS, THE PROPOSAL IS MERELY ONE MORE MINI-REFORM.

2. INTERNAL POLITICS: CHIRAC DECLARED THAT, IF THE LEFT CAME TO POWER, THERE COULD BE SERIOUS PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE TOWN HALL AND THE GOF. HE UNDERScoreD HIS DETERMINATION TO REMAIN MAYOR UNTIL THE END OF HIS SIX-YEAR TERM. WHEN ASKED FLATLY WHETHER OR NOT HIS AMBITION WAS TO BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF FRANCE, HE REPLIED THAT RIGHT NOW HE IS ONLY CONCERNED WITH AN ELECTORAL VICTORY IN THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 1978. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE REITERATED HIS BELIEF THAT FRANCE IS GETTING INTO EVER-DEEPER ECONOMIC PROBLEMS; THE EFFORT TO STAND OFF THE LEFT MUST BE POLITICAL AS WELL

AS ECONOMIC, SINCE TIME IS RUNNING OUT. A VICTORY OF
THE LEFT, "WHICH CAN NO LONGER BE EXCLUDED," WILL BRING

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ABOUT AN "ADVENTURE" FROM WHICH FRANCE WILL TAKE YEARS
TO RECOVER.

3. COMMENT: CHIRAC CANNOT BE ACCUSED OF MINCING HIS
WORDS; BUT THERE ARE DISQUIETING ASPECTS TO SOME OF HIS
COMMENTS. READING BOTH DIRECTLY AND BETWEEN THE LINES,
WE DRAW THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS:

-- THE RPR IS GOING TO MAKE TROUBLE FOR PRIME
MINISTER BARRE IN THE COMING MONTHS, AND INDEED BARRE
HIMSELF MAY NO LONGER REPRESENT THE PERSONAL THREAT TO
CHIRAC THAT HE DID BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT CHANGE ON MARCH
29. BEFORE THEN CHIRAC HAD TO RECKON WITH THE PRIME
MINISTER'S EVER-MOUNTING POPULARITY CHARTS AND THE
BELIEF ON THE PART OF MANY THAT THE PLAN HAD A REAL
CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING IN TIME TO INFLUENCE THE ELECTORATE
IN 1978.

-- THE ROAD TO A MAJORITY AGREEMENT OVER EUROPE
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WILL BE BUMPIER THAN EXPECTED.

-- A VICTORY OF THE LEFT IN 1978, WHICH CHIRAC CONSIDERED MERELY A POSSIBILITY A FEW WEEKS AGO, HE NOW APPEARS TO CONSIDER A NEAR PROBABILITY. THIS IS MORE EVIDENT FROM THE TONE THAN THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS ATTACKS WHICH ARE EVER MORE VIOLENT AS HIS FEARS OF A LEFT VICTORY SEEM MORE WELL-FOUNDED (I.E., HE RECENTLY DECLARED THAT, WERE THE LEFT TO WIN IN 1978, GISCARD WOULD BE THE LAST PRESIDENT OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC).

4. THE QUESTION REMAINS WHETHER CHIRAC WAS SPEAKING FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION OR WHETHER HE IS REALLY CONVINCED THAT, FOR EXAMPLE, THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ACTING IN BAD FAITH OVER CONCORDE AND THE IEA. THE PROBABILITY IS THAT HE SINCERELY BELIEVES WHAT HE IS SAYING. IT MAY BE THAT, HAVING CONCLUDED THAT A MAJORITY DEFEAT IN 1978 IS NOW LIKELY, CHIRAC HAS DECIDED TO LET LOOSE ON ALL POLICY ISSUES, KEEPING HIS RECORD GOOD FOR AN EVENTUAL RETURN TO POWER SHOULD FRANCE, IN THE GAULIST TRADITION, CALL ON HIM AND THE MOVEMENT. HE IS CERTAINLY BEGINNING TO SOUND MORE AND MORE LIKE AN OPPOSITION LEADER, TO THE POINT WHERE SOME FRENCH JOURNALISTS PRESENT AT THE APRIL 7 LUNCH WERE CONVINCED OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE RPR COULD HIT BARRE'S 12-MONTH PLAN WHEN IT COMES UP FOR A VOTE IN THE ASSEMBLY AT THE END OF THIS MONTH. CHIRAC AND THE RPR ARE CURRENTLY OCCUPYING MOST OF THE MAJORITY POLITICAL SCENE AND ARE BECOMING A KIND OF COUNTER-POWER WITHIN THE GOF ANALOGOUS IN CERTAIN RESPECTS TO PS LEADER MITTERRAND'S SHADOW CABINET.
GAMMON

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